

Palms to Pines Scenic Byway Workshop II Series

January 31 – February 2, 2011

Vision and Intrinsic Features:

Interpretation and Stories of the Byway

Attendees

Between the three community locations, 24 members of the community joined representatives of the San Bernardino National Forest, the BLM Santa Rosa and San Jacinto National Monument Staff, Caltrans, Forest Service Recreation Solutions staff and Dr. Emilyn Sheffield, professor with California State University at Chico.

Agenda

Meeting objectives included:

- Review information from the first workshop
- Seek information for a draft “vision” statement
- Seek input on interpretation themes and story-lines for the CMP
- Identify “untold stories” that would enhance a visitor’s experience
- Identify additional intrinsic qualities along the route
- Discuss the process for developing a visual identity
- Introduce Workshop III’s topic: Transportation

Meeting Notes

Recap of Workshop I: Emilyn described workshop participants’ shared desire to preserve the historic character and uses of the road while improving roadway safety. She also acknowledged the differing opinions on how best to achieve those desires. Some are interested in the economic benefits of tourism while others are concerned with increased traffic and congestion. All participants cherish this place and are interested in maintaining the sense of community. Most hope to develop tools to teach potential visitors who are unfamiliar with the landscape how to travel safely and respectfully. Regardless of whether the communities along the byway choose to pursue national scenic byway designation, the completed CMP will be a testimony of community values and visions.

After Emilyn listed the six goals and objectives (page 2 of Corridor Management Newsletter) identified at Workshop I, a community participant asked that another goal/objective specifically describing improving safety along the byway be added. Safety is a topic that has been discussed at all of the meetings thus far and is an important aspect of the project to many workshop participants.

Community Vision for the Byway Corridor

Describe the “big story” of the area. These stories can be developed into interpretive themes as a way to share information about the corridor. Residents know and love this area and know how to “read” the landscape. Interpretation helps visitors learn to love the land the way residents do. She gave examples of the interpretive themes identified for the Angeles Crest and Yuba River Scenic Byways. Each provides an overall theme with several sub-themes designed to tell the stories of the byway corridor.

See list of Draft Vision Statement Ideas

Key words related to a byway vision that seemed to resonate with community participants followed a theme of protection and preservation, a desire to share the story of this place so it engenders a sense of stewardship and caring in visitors, and the idea that the area is a place for respite and renewal.

There will be some stories you want to share and some stories you may not want to share. Locations that could be damaged or altered by too much visitation can be left off the intrinsic qualities list included in the CMP to minimize visibility. Alternate interpretation and focus on other locations can deflect attention from sensitive locations and provide further protection.

Intrinsic Features

The Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) has identified six categories of intrinsic qualities for scenic byways that represent unique, irreplaceable, or distinctly characteristic features of a byway corridor. Some qualities may fit under more than one category and it is possible to nominate a byway for national designation in more than one category.

Cultural features are the evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people. Cultural features include, but are not limited to, crafts, music, dance, rituals, festivals, speech, food, special events, and vernacular architecture that are currently practiced.

Archaeological features are historic and prehistoric features that are on or adjacent to the byway, are still visible and capable of being inventoried and interpreted, and are appropriate to highlight.

Scenic features are heightened visual experience derived from the view of natural and manmade elements of the visual environment.

Historic features encompass legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with physical elements of the landscape, whether natural or manmade, and that are of such historic significance that they educate the viewer and stir an appreciation of the past.

Recreation features involve outdoor recreational activities directly associated with, and dependent upon, the natural and cultural elements of the corridor's landscape.

Natural features are those in the visual environment that are in a relatively undisturbed state. These features predate the arrival of human populations, and may include geological formations, fossils, landforms, water bodies, vegetation, and wildlife.

Creating the list of intrinsic features can be used to build an interpretive plan for the byway. A good interpretive plan provides a framework to package your story and provide a clear and coherent description for the casual visitor.

The completed CMP will list the interpretation theme that community participants feel are the important stories to share. The implementation plan section will describe how to share your stories and teach visitors to slow down and appreciate the unique aspects of this corridor

(potentially through signing, brochures, information at visitor centers, and the national monument or community festivals).

Establishing a Visual Identity

Almost 15 years ago, Emily participated in a project to design a series of byway marks (or icons) for the state scenic highways in northern California to give each scenic highway a visual identity and to draw visitors from the high-speed I-5 corridor. Subsequently, byway marks have also been developed for the Angeles Crest, Carson Pass, and Yuba River scenic byways as well. One of the products of this grant will be a Palms to Pines scenic byway set of icons. There will be one master illustration to fit with the State system and visually describe the route as a whole, and an additional six supporting illustrations specific to features along the route.

The style of the images will be created as part of the existing set of byway marks, with consistent dimensions, typeset, and borders. The final images will be in the public domain so communities can use them as a tool for interpretation along the byway corridor. The icons can be used by communities, the forest or the BLM, or by anyone for any public purpose such as maps, postcards or brochures. Although they are produced in a vector format and can be reproduced from postage stamp to poster size, they are not suitable for highway signs. Caltrans and the FS have strict regulations regarding roadway signing, and the images aren't suitable for reading at highway speed. Poster sized images are better used at wayfinding kiosks or visitor centers.

Throughout the workshops, we'll ask community participants to describe what you may like to convey; we'll provide photographs and story lines to the artists; and the artists will develop three potential icon images. We will be looking for a volunteer from each workshop to participate on the "art team" to vote for the final images.

Pre-work for Transportation Workshop

Timory shared the first draft of the CMP's transportation section. She gave a brief description of the FHWA's required topics, the information she is seeking to include, and the information she hopes community participants can help her fill out regarding desired highway safety features and signage.

One community member asked about the accident data section and requested that we include several years' data (more than just last two years) and as much information as possible regarding accident causality instead of just the numbers.

Another participant discussed the fact that this mountain route is not an easy drive for tentative drivers. Perhaps it would be appropriate to set the expectations for what driving Hwy 74 and 243 will be like early in the route before people have come too far. This could be accomplished with warning signing early in the route in areas suitable for turnaround warning drivers of the curvy, mountainous nature of the route.

Additional discussion included the need for signing to identify driving conventions for using turnoffs if you have five or more vehicles following. Many drivers whose experience is limited to freeway driving don't realize the common courtesy of using turnouts to allow faster moving traffic to pass on a two-lane road.

Caltrans representatives were able to attend two of the evening workshops and provided maps of the currently funded/scheduled roadway maintenance/improvements projects (see attachment). William Mosby, Deputy District Director Chief, Division of Planning, described Caltrans' responsibility to identify and rectify safety issues and to improve mobility and accessibility for reliable, predictable, and uncongested transportation routes. He explained it is not Caltrans' goals to change the nature of the road, just to provide safe transportation. Although the maintenance team is spread thinly under current budget constraints, Caltrans likes to hear from the public about places that need improvement. Bill said he saw this project as a good opportunity for Caltrans to work with the local communities to identify and pursue roadway improvements.

Dan Kopulsky, a planner with Caltrans, District 8, mentioned the potential to apply for a route designation as a "safety corridor" which could provide funding for additional highway patrol and enforcement of speed and safety regulations. (This grant is available from a separate agency other than Caltrans.)

Questions

This route is a State scenic byway and there have been multiple histories written about the area; what is the purpose of federal designation and going through this process?

National designation is designed to highlight and preserve great American driving experiences. Your area has such a rich, documented history, we will not be trying to re-invent the wheel or step on the toes of more qualified historians. The best way to incorporate much of the written history may be to include an annotated bibliography of existing history sources.

The advantage of completing a CMP, regardless of whether national designation is sought, is not only to describe the history and interpretive themes of the route, but to pull the many different regulatory documents tied to the highway corridor into one document. County planning documents and ordinances, the 1989 San Bernardino Land and Resource Management Plan, the 2004 Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Management Plan, and the 1980 California Desert Conservation Area Plan (as amended) are all documents that may regulate land use within the highway corridor.

The other advantage of a community-developed CMP is the resulting documentation of implementation items and desired highway safety features that can be included in future grant proposals for local community groups or government agencies.

How do the Roy Wilson Memorial Highway and Roy Wilson Memorial Scenic Highway designations fit in with national scenic byway designation?

Memorial highway designations made by local government agencies can complement a national scenic byway designation, highlighting stories specific and relevant to the byway vision and stories. They do not preclude nor prevent eventual designation.

How does the presence of federally listed threatened or endangered species or critical habitat affect national scenic byway designation?

The national scenic byway program is a recognition program only, and in and of itself does not cause any direct change to a species or its habitat requiring consideration under the Endangered Species Act or the National Environmental Policy Act. If one of the land management agencies subsequently proposes a construction or reconstruction project based on an implementation strategy described in the CMP, that project may need to consider those affects in an environmental analysis.

How wide is the byway corridor? How wide is the Caltrans right-of-way?

The FHWA does not identify a particular width for a national scenic byway. The interim policy defines “corridor” as the road or highway right-of-way and the adjacent area that is visible from and extending along the highway. The distance the corridor extends from the highway could vary with the different intrinsic qualities.

Caltrans defines corridor as “land that is visible from, adjacent to, and outside the highway right-of-way, and is comprised primarily of scenic and natural features. Topography, vegetation, viewing distance, and/or jurisdictional lines determine the corridor boundaries.” Local governing bodies are required to include a topographic map that shows the proposed scenic corridor boundaries and scenic highway limits with the scenic highway proposal. This map should be included in A Plan and Action Program for the Pines to Palms Scenic Highway, dated April 1971, that Riverside County submitted to nominate this route as a State scenic highway. We are working to track down this document to include with the final CMP.

Closing

Emilyn closed out by asking folks to consider either April 4 to 7 or April 25 to 28 as possible dates for Workshop III. We may shift the workshop evenings to Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday if there aren't any conflicts for community participants. The date sets work for both the Idyllwild Nature Center and Apple Canyon Center; however the Pinyon Fire Hall will be undergoing renovations in the ready room. The Pinyon Crest Community Center and the Elks Mountain Retreat were offered for use as alternatives. In addition, the Santa Rosa Reservation had offered use of their facilities at one of the meetings prior to the workshops. As the tribe's history and current use of the land within the byway corridor is an important aspect of this story, perhaps checking into that opportunity will encourage their participation in developing the Palms to Pines CMP.